

REVIEW

FLORA OF HENRY COUNTY, ILLINOIS, AN ANNOTATED LIST OF THE VASCULAR PLANTS. Raymond J. Dobbs. 350 pp., 2 pl., map (folded, inside back cover). Natural Land Institute, 303 Penfield Place, Rockford, Illinois. 1963. \$5.00.

Henry County, Illinois, scarcely ranks as a botanical paradise. Located in the northwestern part of the state (close to but not on the Mississippi River, three counties south from the Wisconsin border), it is a typical glaciated prairie county, largely under cultivation. The difference in elevation between the lowest and highest points within its 826 square miles is just 315 feet. The only major physical feature is the Rock River, and this only for a short distance at the northwest corner, where it forms the boundary for some 20 miles. The few woodlands have mostly been cleared; marshes and bogs have been drained. The author tells us that he worked for some years as a naturalist in California, including a tour of duty in Yosemite National Park, and traveled extensively throughout the United States and Canada to observe plants. One would think that any leisure hours back in Geneseo would be spent looking at pictures of more interesting places. Instead, for 22 years, Mr. Dobbs made systematic and intensive botanical trips up and down his home county, both by car and on foot. He says of his *Flora*, "It was made solely as a scientific contribution, at the personal expense of the author, and under no official auspices." One would like to devise a special medal to award those who do not demand inflated N.S.F. grants, a pack of assistants, and the ballyhoo and flummery that have become a routine part of American science, but who calmly, objectively, and conscientiously devote themselves to straightforward accomplishment of straightforward scientific tasks. Its recipients would be rare birds indeed.

Mr. Dobbs speaks in the introduction of his friendship with C. C. Deam, and the first title in his list of references is Deam's *Flora of Indiana*. Perhaps the best compliment one can give the *Flora of Henry County* is that Deam would certainly have approved. It immediately invites comparison with Egbert W. Fell's recent (1955) *Flora of Winnebago County, Illinois*, another excellent local flora which evidently served as a model. Both are annotated catalogues without keys, reproduced from typescript with non-justified margins, and bound in hard covers. For the Dobbs book, the type has not been reduced in size, and scientific names are in capital letters rather than lower case underlined; the resulting page appearance is, I think, more pleasing. Mr. Dobbs gives a rather full account of glacial history and soils, but in contrast with the Winnebago *Flora*, says very little about vegetation types. But then there is hardly a great deal to be said about natural vegetation in the

county described as "Hog Capital of the World." There are 1,073 species accepted as members of the flora (Winnebago County has 1,210). Notes on medicinal plants and those poisonous to livestock have been supplied from other publications. More valuable to the taxonomist are notes on the distinctness of different varieties as represented in the area. There are two full-page illustrations: a photo of *Pedicularis canadensis* var. *Dobbsii* Fernald as frontispiece, and on page 147 a drawing of *Rubus Dobbsii* L. H. Bailey, here newly described from manuscript supplied by Dr. Bailey. Nomenclature mainly follows that of Fernald's 8th edition of Gray's *Manual*; the author makes numerous acknowledgments of assistance with determinations given by Fernald. Some collections have been deposited at the Gray Herbarium; the principal set is at the State Natural History Survey in Urbana.

In reviewing Jones and Fuller's *Vascular Plants of Illinois* several years ago (S.W. Nat. 1: 44—47, 1956), I commented on the impressive progress the state has made toward the kind of complete coverage which exists for the British Isles. It is of interest to make a few comparisons between the *Flora of Henry County* and a recent English county flora, the privately published *A Flora of Nottinghamshire*, by R. C. L. Howitt and B. M. Howitt (1963). Nearly identical in size with Henry County (844 square miles), Nottinghamshire is described by the authors as almost "the average English county. . . . There is nothing spectacular, no mountains or torrents, no seaboard, no natural lakes." The most conspicuous difference between it and the Illinois county is the presence of a large industrial city and of coal mines. The most conspicuous botanical difference is in the original vegetation, which was forest. In almost incredible contrast with what has happened to original vegetation in Illinois, substantial portions of Sherwood Forest, of Robin Hood fame, still exist. There are 79 persons listed as recorders who have contributed information about the flora (in addition to the two authors), over a period of more than 300 years, starting about 1650—different indeed from the strictly modern, one-man performance of Mr. Dobbs.

The Nottinghamshire *Flora* suggests some comforting things about the American scene. Two very familiar clichés applied to European settlement in America are "taming the wilderness" and "the raw frontier." The two reveal a subconscious awareness that crude destruction is not exactly the same as refined civilization. The land is to be lived in rather than off, and familiarly known and loved. In Winnebago County there are forest preserves, and the *Flora* was sponsored by The Nature Conservancy—hopeful omens for the future. Henry County of course cannot boast any remnants of a Sherwood Forest, but enough survives to have kept an energetic naturalist occupied for 22 years. Now we have something that records what is there, and in so doing makes us more aware of it. We can hope that those who live in Henry County

will acquire greater appreciation of the land and the plants around them.

Mr. Dobbs has given us a book that is not only a solid contribution to science, but a significant step in cultural progress as well.—*Lloyd H. Shimmers.*